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Wildlife Research Unit at UM receives \$4,375 for elk study

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1-23-74
local + cs +WILDLIFE RESEARCH UNIT AT UM
RECEIVES \$4,375 FOR ELK STUDY

MISSOULA--

The Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Montana in Missoula has received a grant of \$4,375 from the U.S. Forest Service for a study of the migratory habits of elk herds in the Salmon, Beaverhead and Bitterroot National Forests. The research project, which involves an area of 2,500 square miles, is a cooperative effort involving UM, the Idaho Fish & Game Department and Salmon National Forest.

Dr. Bart W. O'Gara, research director of the project, who is a UM affiliate in forestry and zoology and assistant leader in the Wildlife Research Unit, said the study is needed because logging operations tentatively scheduled to take place in the relatively undeveloped study areas of Montana and Idaho could adversely affect elk herds. Earlier studies conducted in Montana and Idaho indicate that elk avoid areas of intense activity such as logging, he said.

O'Gara said elk herds utilizing the Salmon wintering range may be the same herds that spend their summers on the Big Hole or the West Fork of the Bitterroot Range.

"If that is true, we hope to determine if the animals use specific migratory routes or if they migrate in a willy-nilly fashion," O'Gara said.

He said scientists participating in the study hope to learn the best times of the year for logging activities in the areas being studied, the timber resource values compared with the elk grazing values of the respective areas and if certain drainages should not be logged because they are important migrating routes for elk.

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WILDLIFE RESEARCH UNIT--2

Elk for the study will be captured by the Idaho Fish & Game Department by baiting them with hay into live traps. Special collars with radio transmitters will be attached to about a dozen of the animals, and impulses sent out by the transmitters will be traced and recorded from airplanes. Other elk will have rope collars with such information as location of entrapment and age and sex.

Nicholas Grkovic (pronounced Gerkovic), a UM graduate student in wildlife biology who is a retired Navy commander from Salmon, Idaho, is student researcher for the study. Grkovic said he hopes follow-up grants will enable him and others participating in the study to do more extensive research on elk rutting areas, calving grounds, and resting and feeding areas.

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